

Tales from the Red Strings of Fate

By: Aguagi

A collection of non-canon crack fics brought about by late night ponderings- one fic per chapter. All are unrelated to each other, with one exception in the future. Dual effort by White Okami and I. First letter(s) of the chapter name indicates who wrote it.

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Tales from the Red Strings of Fate

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A: Space Strippers

The fight was entering into its sixth minute. As far as Ryuko knew, this damnable woman was just making things harder than they needed to be. She was running out of time, and if they didn't wrap up soon-

"Take a look at your precious planet."

"Huh?"

Damn! They were too late.

"No... No, bitch, don't do it!"

"Yes..." Ragyo purred. "Earth has finally become a cocoon to house the life fibers. It seems like you were too slow. Those poor people."

In a blink of an eye, the multilayered life fiber mesh contracted. As one might squeeze an orange in their palm with colossal force to destroy it, so too did the life fibers with Earth. With an almighty twist, the Earth was rent in two, then five, then two thousand, and then as particles as innumerable as the cares Ragyo didn't give about the mayhem it caused. A sea of red fibers extended outward in all directions, enveloping both ladies in its indescribably gentle caress for a fraction of a minute. Then it was gone, and all that was left were two hybrid humans, a peculiar lip-shaped satellite, the moon, and the Earth, crushed and discarded like a child's ill-favored toy.

"Oh my god. Mako!" Ryuko cried, futilely extending a hand towards the destroyed planet. "Satsuki!" She scanned the surface, looking for any sign of her closest friend and her sister's body, but neither they, their friends, nor her adopted family could be discerned from the masses. Her body quivered with barely contained rage. As much as she wanted to lose control, give in to the berserker lying in wait underneath, and thrash her mother, she knew it was a useless

gesture. Ragyo was still invincible as far as she knew, and it would only end in her death faster.

"Oh, would you look at that. I've won." Ragyo announced smugly, immobilizing her daughter with a well-placed series of stabs. "So the cycle you have refused to listen and submit to has heralded its ultimate truth once more. Humans were born to serve life fibers. The cries of seven billion people have birthed a new era. And you, my darling daughter, have become like me as a god to the universe! The ultimate life form's cycle has renewed, and you've played a magnificent part. I must thank you."

"The delinquent's hand imperceptibly gripped the dual swords' handles grips tighter. "You bitch!"

The crossguards snapped smartly against the kamui-borne lances, easily finding purchase between the converging crevices. Wincing as the lodged lances uncomfortably resisted her muscles, Ryuko wriggled until both heeled feet rested against her crossed swords, and used the quillons to kick herself off. With a roar, Ryuko renewed her attack against her mother, attempting to slice her in vain, only to be brutally swatted aside or ripped to shreds by those damned white cloth tendrils Ragyo so favored. Red fibers burned in the younger girl's gashes as the wounds immediately started closing, although no distinctly human elements were lost.

"Healing faster, my dear child? I suppose I must also up the ante as well!"

"Ryuko, if your reflexes continue to be outpaced by her attacks, you'll soon die." Senketsu intoned as Ryuko failed to parry yet another strike with her sword and was ripped in half for the second time in three hours by a drill dash.

"You don't think I know that? I'm *tired*," the half-human all but snarled.

"You tired?" the kamui's eye narrowed slightly, his tone sharp and accusing. "Tired of living?"

"No!"

"Will you trust me once more as you have done in Ōsaka?"

"Do I *need* to answer that question?"

"Then listen to me, I have a plan," the kamui tightened around her bust reassuringly before quietly communicating with her, aware that the Revocs CEO could very well hear him.

"I see." Ryuko's lips pulled past her teeth to show off her canines once he was finished. "Fear is freedom..." she whispered in awe. Speeding towards the life fiber drill her mother wielded, the softly intoned words gave way to her yelled battle cry. "Let's finish this!"

"Finish what, exactly? Your life?" Ragyo sing-songingly mocked.

The younger hybrid willingly let the oversized lance pierce through her abdomen. The senior woman hooted triumphantly, digging the weapon deeper into the yielding flesh. With a satisfied smirk, the elder god leisurely took the time to monologue. A voice in the back of her mind protested all too loudly, demanding the other's life be snuffed out immediately. She quieted it harshly. She had her prey trapped with no foreseeable way out- checkmate.

"No, dying is how I will live!"

"You only can stand before me with the aid of the power of the life fibers!" the matron crowed. "It's a shame that I would have to get rid of such a perfect specimen of mutualism."

"Subjugation is liberation..." Ryuko breathed. Maybe it was the anticipation of what she was about to do next, but she swore she saw a hallucinatory image of a smiling Mako, Satsuki, and all their friends gathered behind them, cheering her on.

"A cheap knock-off could never touch the power of a true god robe!" Ragyo continued, faux-comfortingly ruffling her daughter's messy mane as the teen's blood messily spilled onto the white cloth. "You have no hope of winning!"

Mirth soon turned to confusion as Ryuko didn't cry out in defeat. Rather, she started laughing. It started low, perhaps like a growl in the back of her throat, but it soon blossomed into a loud braying one.

"Have you forgotten so easily?" the golden haired girl grinned, black-tinted ethereal wisps feeding from Shinra Koketsu into her back as her strength magnified. Ragyo tried to draw back as sudden understanding of what her daughter was doing dawned upon her, horrified, but the impaled drill she left in her daughter's stomach prevented her from doing so. "The closer I get to death, the stronger I become. This is how I'll live! Snatching life from the jaws of death! It is *because* Senketsu is a fake that he is the only genuine godrobe to exist! And as I take your Absolute Domination ability for myself, you are about to learn the greatest lesson of all!"

" *N... nani?* "

"Contradiction is truth!"

Ryuko roared, her blade easily passing through the cloth to land a devastating hit passing along the collarbone and ending at a bicep. Stripped of the shielding that made the kamui invincible, the rending scissors easily tore the layered blades whirled, and more of the decorated kamui was ripped like buckshot through wet paper with every swipe. Shocked, the silver-haired woman held her wounded arm steadfastly as the remainder of what she stood for was literally shredded into pieces before her. Red blossomed from the deep cut, the droplets pulling away from the gash all too easily. What concerned her the most, however, was that it wasn't healing at all. That must mean not only did she take her kamui's powers... she also learned how to control it without a second thought!

The stunned woman hadn't even had time to process this new knowledge before the scissor blades brutally tore the rest of the massive god robe away.

"The scissor blades weren't dad's final weapon- it was Senketsu and me! It's the unlimited absorption ability that the two of us possess! We are not human or clothing, but at the same time we *are* human, clothing, and everything else! And you will bow down to these facts, you pig in human clothing!"

She thought she saw Satsuki nod approvingly before dissipating.

And with a final groan, Shinra Koketsu shattered, fragmenting in a blindingly bright flash of light. The space thrummed as such power was released, destroying the now useless satellite and wiping out the lagging life fiber parasites that had failed to escape the area in one explosive blow.

Finishing Move: Sen i Sōshitsu!

(Fiber Lost/Stripped of the Will to Fight)

The irate teen turned to face the monster who brought her into the world, effortlessly absorbing the tattered remains of the godrobe into Senketsu. "Kokoro seimei sen'!"

Absolute Domination: Kokoro Seimei Sen'!

Ryuko twitched her hand. Ragyo's body seized violently and began to move without her knowledge. Before long, it hovered over her sternum, and with a quick plunge, held the enlarged glittering heart in her hands.

"What is this!?"

The aforementioned woman's red eyes widened as her strength suddenly failed her, although the claw that held her heart remained steadfast. The rainbow-colored hair that became her trademarked defining trait faded to a dull sheen akin to an unpolished spoon.

"Payback," the younger responded venomously, simultaneously raising one finger upward from its fisted position to further accentuate the power she held over the other. "Ragyo! Your power is broken!"

She fingered her scissor blades thoughtfully. "These blades may not have been as sharp as Bakuzan, but unlike them, they can never be broken! For that is the truth I proclaim. Humans are human! Clothing is clothing! Humans can never become clothing, for they don't live for it!"

"Such trash flowing from your mouth!" the former rainbow-haired elder roared impetuously. "But I suppose I should have expected as much. Trash from a trash child. How like begat lik-" Her grip on the pulsating organ tightened against her will. "Ah!"

She glared at the eerily calm teen observing her dispassionately.

"I could kill you... It would be so easy..."

"Then do it," Ragyo grinned wolfishly, canines that were so very much like her progeny's sticking past pink lip-glossed lips. "Slay me and take your place as the rightful new god of the universe."

"I want to so badly..." Ryuko's voice dropped to a near-whisper, gear-shaped pupils dangerously small. "I want to paint the surface of the moon with your blood and watch you suffer as much as you have made others suffer." A tongue ran over chapped lips. "Perhaps I'll tie you to an asteroid so you can see what you've done. Or perhaps I'll force you to undergo a fate worse than a quick end. Imagine that, huh? Suffering day in and day out in a living death and realizing what you've done... unable to do anything but live as I please. No easy exit for you by destroying your own heart."

"I *know* what I've done," the elder proclaimed. "That is the reason why my actions have reflected my beliefs so!"

Ryuko's forehead vein visibly twitched. She leaned against her scissor blades in such a Satsuki-like manner; part of her believed that her sister would have been impressed- amused even. One part of her really wanted to make her mother yank the rest of her organs out and threaten to crush them. The other half wanted to hear what line of reasoning- no matter how inane or incomprehensible- the matriarch had for ending the world and causing an apocalypse destructive enough to put most science-fiction writers to shame.

"When man first ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they were stained with original sin and became dirty. Impure. After years of searching, I had found the primordial life fiber and served it faithfully. Only though life fibers can humanity ever hope to rise from their folly- and although you are such a shining example of the pinnacle humanity can reach, only *I* fully understand this concept. Only *I* wielded the power to change their state! Only *I*-"

"Fōsu!" Unexpectedly, the banged girl shouted at her mother, the life-fiber enhanced force easily pushing the heavier woman away like a fly swatted with a newspaper. Ryuko released her control over her mother, pointing her favored sword at the latter's throat. She was shining brilliantly now, her hidden Kiryuin charisma awoken and magnified far more radiantly than the petty displays her sister once had blinded her with.

" **Fool!** Do you not understand the ramifications of your actions? But you are pitiful to me now." She glared at her mother. "Flee. Hide. Do whatever you wish now that you are as helpless as I was when you cruelly performed your experiments and left me for dead. But hear this, Kiryuin Ragyo! Wherever you will go in the universe, I will find you... and I **will** destroy everything you stood for. No matter *what* it takes. I pledge to all of those who fell today that until my dying breath, I will stop the machinations you have brought into the universe..." Ryuko growled. "Every step of the way. Whatever you've

planned..." A sudden thought occurred to her. "Wait, what *have* you planned now that you've achieved your goal?"

Secretly, Ragyo was impressed while Ryuko ranted and raved that silly speech heroes were wont to do. Not even her mental refitting when she bound her daughter and Junketsu together had caused her to unleash the full extent of the Kiryuin charisma. Still, she had a reputation to keep, even when defeated and had a heart slowly reenter the appropriate bodily cavity. How dare this ungrateful insect speak to her in that manner! To think that she had once extended the ultimate grace of being a god of the universe to this brash uncouth child! Why, she should have cut her down where she had the chance! Wait...

"... What? I mean, why should I tell you!?"

"What are you. Going. To. Do?" Ryuko repeated, irascible. "Don't tell me you didn't give any thought to the outcome after your master plan was completed!"

"I... I didn't think... I mean-"

"You didn't think?" The seventeen year old exploded. " **You didn't *think!*** " Ragyo mutely nodded, the power of absolute domination easily usurping her will and decimating any resistance that remained. "Great! Just *perfect!* " She ran a hand through her mussed hair. "We *can* go on without eating, right? I mean, it's not so much of a stretch if we're standing here- alive- without oxygen."

"I... think so?"

"Look, don't tell me you didn't think this all the way through." The fifty-something year old remained silent. Ryuko pinched the bridge of her nose between her eyes. "Oh for Satsuki's sake... So your big plan was to: find the primordial life fiber, establish a monopoly on the world's clothing companies, make Earth a cocoon planet, '?', and then profit? That's a big fat lie coming from the likes of you, Kiryuin."

"Look, this form is only generating the bare minimum amount of energy needed keep me alive. I literally do not have the energy to lie to you. Is it bad if I say 'yes'?"

"I hate you," Ryuko spat, feeling a migraine coming on. "I **hate** you."

"If you didn't try to *murder* me, I would have thought this through better!"

"You had over 20 years! I should be forcing you to walk into the sun right now!" The warrior icily stared at the other for five entire minutes in silence without blinking once- an impressive feat given that she was also massaging her temples.

The fennec-fox-ear-shaped-haired woman blinked and uneasily squirmed before the other's gaze. "So, can I-?"

"Just... go..." the delinquent snarled, her voice once more dangerously imitating the Kiryuin charisma that flowed through their blood.

Ragyo turned and all but flew towards the deepest crater in the moon, too weak to go any further. Ryuko took off in the opposite direction, using her enhanced speed and durability to catch up to the wave of fibers that had escaped her earlier within an hour.

" *Zettai Fukujū*: Kokoro seimei sen'i! Sukai haru natsu!" she shouted, and the wriggling masses of life fibers fell before her as her body, engulfed in a prismatic colored aura, propelled her voice towards them. Against absolute life fiber domination, they were helpless to resist, and their figures unwillingly withered before their master and became dust as fine as sand.

Clear Skies: Sora Haru Natsu!

(Sky Spring Summer)

Ryuko frowned. No sign of the humans within them. Did it mean that life fibers completely absorbed their humans to make travel easier? Senketsu activated its flight mode and the duo flew off to make sure the other 'red threads of fate' met their ends.

"You alright?" the wearer asked, mindlessly bisecting the aggregated preponderant threads ad nauseum until they were weakened enough to fall before the whispered ghost of her prized shout.

"Yes," her partner replied, albeit too monotonously for his usual personality. "Your continued use of the absolute domination shout has thankfully stemmed the influx of power I gained when I absorbed Shinra Koketsu and prevented unnecessary strain on my fibers. But I was thinking..."

"Hm...?" she replied, easily killing a stray COVER outside of her optical range with one swipe of her sword.

"... We should visit Ragyo and... possibly make peace with her."

Ryuko nearly choked on her breath. "That bitch!?" She fiercely tugged at the lapel that made up his eye. "What's gotten into you? Are you insane!?"

"I said make peace. Not accept her. It is not right to forgive her after what she's done."

"Damn straight." the hybrid snorted, one-shotting another mass of living suits.

"You forgave your father after a lifetime of neglect."

"That's because he wanted to *save* the world! *She* wants nothing and has done nothing but destroy it! I don't care what seized her and gave her the idea that this was the best or right thing to do! She killed the only people that I've ever considered family with a smile! Do you think I'm ever going to be ready to *forgive* her!?"

Senketsu thankfully stayed silent after that, and Ryuko was secretly grateful. There was absolutely no way she was going to make up with the monster that destroyed billions of people. Not now, not ever. She was absolutely sure of that. After all, it was very much like her to hold onto her hate and use it to power her ambitions, just like Satsuki. It wasn't like she was going to start forgiving her any time soon. Right?

=Several Years Later=

A golden-haired human in a dazzling red formfitting suit with a similarly colored highlight in her hair touched down on the moon's surface. A small plume of gray-colored dust swirled around her heeled feet. Still clothed in such magnificent augmentations, the teen-turned-young-woman scaled the rough surface. Scars littered her body- a telltale sign of the numerous battles she faced when completely purging the existence of the parasitic life forms that had escaped from the destroyed planet that fateful day as well as vigilantly destroying any evolved life forms that carried them outside of the solar system. Her hair had grown far past the bottom of her shoulders now, but the red streak symbolizing her inhumanity was still prominent among them. Her face was more angled and cheeks more contoured, but the half-human still looked not a day over seventeen- the year when she became a fully realized hybrid. Truly, she easily reflected the goddess archetype.

"Oi, Senketsu, do I still have my gold plated cards with me?"
Senketsu's eyes rolled in their cloth sockets. It seemed like her sense of humor hadn't aged any, either.

"Ryuko, I don't see how this relates to anythi-"

"But do I still have them with me or did they fall out during the attack on that titan?"

The kamui gave a long-suffering sigh. "Left pocket, next to where you keep your scissor swords."

"Sweet!"

"How do you not know where the deck of cards are if you have to keep withdrawing and replacing your scissor swords in that pocket?"

"I forget, okay? I knew I shouldn't have let you watched that cinematic sins show," came the muttered reply.

Ryuko pushed off and casually slid along the lunar incline, pointedly ignoring the chuckled laugh that came all too easily in the back of her mind when he 'spoke'. It wasn't too long until a very faint glimmer amongst the gloomy landscape caught her eye. There she was- in the same hole she fled to all those years ago, even. Ryuko shrugged. It made locating her on this barren rock a lot easier. The twenty-odd year old easily found her mother curled into a tight ball on the far side of the crevice. She was still naked.

' Ironic,' the junior thought. ' To think that clothing is sin and revel in it while proclaiming it as purity, but now be pure herself by being stripped... '

Her musings were stopped by an extremely weak growl from a vocal box so scarred and unused. It seemed that her mother had finally realized she had an unwelcome guest in her abode. Tamely, the former reached into her left holster and held out the hand with the pack of cards, casually rocking back and forth on her heels as she watched the latter deliberate. Ragyo eyed the small golden cardboard box viciously, disdainfully glaring at them with seething pinpoint hatred. A peace offering of some sort, the senior ascertained.

" What is this trickery? "

The younger woman's eyes glittered unkindly, although the toothy grin on her face told otherwise. "Strip poker!"

The naked dame stared. "You've got to be kidding me," she mouthed.

The banged girl simply kept smiling.

=Even More Later=

"I can not believe you literally stole the rainbows out of my hair," Ragyo grumbled, grumpily patting the monochromatic deflated mess that used to be an awe-inspiring gradient.

Ryuko shrugged. "When you're god of the universe, you can do a lot of things."

"Then it is fair to assume you cheated."

"Or that I had practice maintaining a poker face and hiding my cards from a certain sailor uniform during similar games."

Senketsu, who was currently detached from its owner at the moment and attempting to pull hidden cards out of his other sleeve, shrugged apologetically.

"So. Got any threes?"

"For the last time, **no**. I don't know how someone that shares my own blood can be this idiotic."

Ryuko punched the ground, sending an impressive plume of dust and moon rocks into the air before pointing a finger at the other woman accusingly. "Hey, fuck you, bitch and listen real good. You killed everyone I knew and loved. You better damn well have a three!"

"And I say I don't, duck face!"

"Spider brain!"

"Imbecile!"

"Lemon fish taco!"

"Muscle bound buffoon!"

"KIRYUIN RAGYO!"

"MATOI RYUKO!"

" Senketsu!" Senketsu senketsu'd.

Author's Note: This was supposed to be a silly fic of Ragyo and Ryuko playing "Go Fish!" on the moon. I don't know what happened. Crack fic inspired and beta-read by White Okami. Japanese translations provided by the amazing Kurouga of the Ink and Snow .

Collection: Part of the "Lahrinkiin-Fiberborn" series.

References list: SNK/Attack on Titan, Skyrim (the series isn't named 'Fiberborn' for nothing), He Man (Skeletor), Portal, Lord of the Rings, Cinema Sins, DashieXP/DashieGames, something that actually happened, and memes.

Shouts: "Fōsu!" - "Force", or " /Fo-su". From the Japanese translation of the first word of the ubiquitous "Fus Ro Dah".

"Kokoro Seimei Sen'i!" - "Mind Life Fiber(s)", or " ". A modified version of the "Bend Will" shout. Can also be written as "Shin Seimei Sen'i".

"Sora haru natsu!" - "Sky Spring Summer", or " ". Skyrim's "Clear Skies" shout. It pokes fun at the Senketsu Kisagari form, which was named "Senketsu Fashion Week" in the English sub/dub because the actual Japanese pun is untranslatable and New York's fashion week usually takes place in the Spring (which I guess is the closest thing to having the same effect. Changing clothes and signaling a new start and all).

WO: Raggy's Rainbow Candy and Ragy-O's

AN: White Okami actually wrote this well over a month ago; I was just super lazy and didn't put it into the compilation here until now. Everything is as they wrote it.

Ragyo watched as her mindless slaves effortlessly put a small tiny little Life Fiber into each and every one of the skittles.

She herself had rainbow hair, so why should she not control everything and everyone associated with rainbows? Ragyo would get the leprechauns next...

Walking out of the factory, she watched as skittles were shipped off, going away by the truckload. She grinned manically, waiting for her chance to come.

Ragyo knew it would be a few years before her clothing and candy got all the world's attention, but that was okay. It gave her time to plan.

The Life Fibers in the skittles would take a long time before they could take over any human completely, but once they had the seed planted inside of them, they would all become slaves to the Life Fibers.

The Fibers would start by slowly taking over their body systems, before taking complete control of the brain. They would, of course, remain dormant until she activated them, and it was very unlikely that the subject wouldn't wear Revocs clothing, but it is always good to have a fail-safe.

Ragyo's Ragy-O's had quickly become a bit hit in the cereal department. She had come up with the idea when she had made up

the skittles one, but this plan had taken far longer to come to fruition, mainly because Ragyo wanted an addicting cereal that would quickly become everyone's favorite.

They were, of course, Os, and were rainbow coloured. Because of this, at first, many had assumed it was a knockoff of Fruit Loops, of all the wretched things they could have compared her cereal to. After a while, however, after people began eating it, they began to think more logical thoughts, such as 'Why is there fruit loops when we have this?' Which of course Ragyo thought most appropriate.

The cereal's secret ingredient, was, of course, Life Fibers. She had talked the OLF into making LF so addicting people just couldn't help but come back for more. Of course, there was also plenty of added sugars...

People had begun to worship the ground Ragyo walked on, if they hadn't already. She thought of them as, of course, completely beneath her.

One day Ragyo got a call from her underlings down in skittles management. They had asked her to oversee some additions to the company, as they needed more space for more mass production of their product.

The manager down in management watched as she walked into the place, already glowing rainbows like the magical Rainbow Woman she was. They bowed immediately, then showed her to the construction.

He took her back to their office, explaining that they wanted to create a new title for skittles and possibly some new package art. Ragyo immediately requested the new name to be Raggy's Rainbow Candy, because why the hell not?

She had grinned as she looked over all the artists' shoulders, complimenting and shutting down each and every idea.

Finally, when they found the perfect art, the manager put it down for immediate printing, and soon Ragyo left.

Watching in slight amusement at the way her company's stocks suddenly skyrocketed, she looked outside the café to see a young child with a bright red streak in her hair holding what appeared to be the original packaging of the old Skittles company, before she had killed everyo-*cough* Er, I mean, before she had taken over it.

The woman watched in growing rage as the candy the girl took from the packaging was not infused with Life Fibers at all! It was just regular, stupid, candy!

Closing her laptop shut so fast it probably broke the screen, Ragyo stepped out into the chilly weather and stopped the young child. Taking a closer look, she appeared to be around nine, about a year younger than her Satsuki.

"Um, excuse me, little girl, I was just wondering where you got that candy from?" Ragyo asked, hands on her knees as she bent down, a fake smile showing through on her lips.

Looking up with widened eyes, the young girl stared in shock at the woman in front of her. Mumbling something, she turned to go around her.

Grasping her arm, Ragyo asked, "Could you repeat that?"

Speaking louder, the girl said, "My daddy told me not to talk to strangers! And to not take candy from them!" After finishing, she unpried Ragyo's fingers and ran off, most likely towards the direction of her home and her 'daddy'.

Sighing, Ragyo stood up, gritting her teeth. Looking for tiny footprints on the muddy ground, she saw them, and started following them towards the direction she had seen the little girl come from.

Stepping into a candy shop a little while later, Ragyo looked around in mild disgust at the disuse and disrepair of the place. Taking a look around, Ragyo saw a shelf of skittles, then, right beside that, her own brand. Why had the little girl bought skittles when her own were so much better? It all just didn't add up. Something wasn't right.

Something was obviously very wrong with that little girl.

Ragyo watched her test group carefully as they began munching on her latest Ragy-O's development. They then turned into animalistic beasts, fighting over the box as they tried to devour it and its contents. Shaking her head in slight disappointment, Ragyo sighed.

There just wasn't enough need to the whole situation. The subjects had to be willing to kill for her cereal. After all, if they didn't put up a good fight, how was she supposed to be willing to take their life force?

They had to be content and making more energy than they knew what to do with in order for her plan to work.

Her daughter had become a nuisance at her school, literally stabbing her in the back. Ragyo wondered if she would enjoy some Ragy-O's.

People had to be willing to kill for her cereal in order for there to be such energy at the time when Ragyo completed her plans so that way the energy in them could be absorbed in her and she could become the ruler of the universe. Or the universe's God. Whichever way fit better with her image.

Pacing down and up the scaffolding in the main factory for Ragyo's Ragy-O's, she began muttering quietly to herself, trying to decide the best ingredient for the secret recipe that was Ragy-O's.

Maybe it was something she had to get from a different planet. Something that would otherwise not exist here.

Or maybe she could use blood. Give the people a taste for it, and then...

The populace was entirely consisted of mind-stitched people who had at one time or another consumed her delightful treat. But at the same time, cannibalism was such an intriguing idea. Is it possible to make people become cannibals?

They were all zombies, but zombies made surprisingly good cannibals.

Ah, the fools at Nudist Beach. What a silly name. They could never resist the temptation of her food, and now all that was left was her daughter, the strange girl from all those years ago...

And Satsuki, of course, but she couldn't be considered a threat anymore. Her sword was broken, her spirit shattered, her subordinates zombies, she herself all chained up.

Nothing they could do. Nobody was going to stop Ragyo. Yet... Why did she feel so empty inside?

Suddenly, as if recalling a memory, Ragyo saw herself, sitting on the moon, playing cards with her daughter as they had ab-so-fuckin'-lutely nothing else to do.

Perhaps that was why she felt empty? No. It must have been the Ragyo-O's she had earlier. After all, she wasn't very fond of sweet things, and there was a lot of sugar in them.

A: Zodiac

"THIS IS A DISGRACE!" Gamagori roared, slamming the offending piece of paper against the table so hard that the dishes rattled and the poor furniture piece cracked under the strain.

The wait staff visibly flinched, but dared not interfere for fear of the giant's wrath. His boss inaudibly sighed and made a mental note to compensate the business owners. Another business they couldn't return to, then. How unfortunate.

"Take it easy, Toad," Nonon grumbled, slinking further down her seat, face uncomfortably hot under the bystanders' curious glances in their direction. "Frogs were probably not prized enough to-"

"BUT A RAT SOMEHOW MADE IT ONTO HERE?!"

"Oi! Don't you *dare* insult my dad!" A red-banged teen shouted back, threateningly pointing her chopsticks in his direction.

Uzu, for his part, was beside himself with laughter, wiping away his tears using the paper placemat decorated with the offending zodiac. "They put monkeys in here but not frogs? Oh, this is just too good."

"You can be an ox, Gamagori-sempai!" Mako comforted, somehow popping over his head to land on his massive shoulders below. His cheeks visibly darkened to a shade of red despite his best efforts as the younger girl rested her head against his. "You're so big and strong-"

"-and stubborn and bullheaded," Nonon mumbled under her breath.

"-and it even has your favorite color, and it says you're diligent and reliable and honest and- is that a piece of cheese on the ground?"

"Indeed," Hoka concurred as the coconut-haired girl dove from her perch to land under the table, the flaps of his turtleneck flying away

to briefly allow others an unobstructed view of his mouth. "Lady Satsuki represents a tiger, Matoi embodies a dragon, Dr. Matoi a rat, Mankanshoku a rabbit, and we... three... devas as our respective animals. That leaves the horse, ox, pig, rooster, and ram... or goat for you to appropriate, depending on what version of the calendar you're using."

Uzu snorted, peeking over his rival's shoulders to glance at whatever she was doing. "I think old Gama here is best suited as a goat. Mythology says that goats are good partners with rabbits, *if you know what I mean.* "

Satsuki took a leisurely sip of her tea, basking in the petty squabbles of those she could confidently call her friends and family. However, the afterglow of welcome company was soon shattered within three seconds. She grimaced and gently replaced the teacup onto its saucer. A new record, then. She'd have to congratulate dear little imouto for a job well done.

"-and it says here that dragons get along *well* with tigers," Ryuko added, wriggling her eyebrows suggestively at her sister. "And *snakes* too!" she hooted, rapturously reading the scrolling text on her smartphone.

"No." she firmly responded.

"Ugh, don't even think about it, underachiever," Nonon agreed. By now, all but the pinkette's oversized hat was hidden under the table.

"Hey, it's not all that great," she shrugged. "It also says that red is an unlucky color for dragons, as are their birthdays and whenever the year of the dragon rolls around- who would have guessed. My lucky flower is a... *bleeding heart*... and that I should avoid the fifth month." She looked up apologetically at the last bit. "Sorry Satsuki."

Satsuki raised her teacup and took a long sip before putting it down again, eyes sparkling with mirth. '*No offense taken,*' the simple gesture said.

"It also says that oxen don't get along with tigers at all," Mako's disembodied voice came from beneath the cloth linings in between bites. "But that doesn't make any sense because Gamagori likes Satsuki very much, and sometimes when he falls asleep, you can hear him saying her name and sometimes he punches a wall or two while yelling that he is her protector and shield and-."

"Satsuki-sama!" he shouted, effectively blocking out whatever the tiny girl was going to say next.

"Gamagori," she replied tacitly, a smile dancing on her lips. "I could have Miss Mankanshoku escorted back to her homes, if you wish. But it would be terrible to lose a fine conversational guest."

"T... that won't be necessary." The light red in his face darkened to a deep maroon.

"Move!" Uzu shouted, grabbing at the device, managing to snatch it out of Ryuko's hands before she could react. "I wanna see who monkeys are compatible with! And it's with... with... oxen..."

The phone slipped from his hand, the rightful owner failing miserably at catching it before it hit the ground and cracked the screen. She snarled and sharply dug her elbow into his side as punishment.

"Sanageyama, you *asshole* ! You better pay for it otherwise I swear I'm going to gut you like a-"

"You all worry about these things too much," Hoka boredly stated, toying with his own smartphone and pointedly clearing away the last bits of food from his plate. "It says that tigers aren't compatible with snakes at all, and yet I don't see Lady Satsuki breathing down Nonon's neck at all. It's just Sanageyama she hates."

"Hey!"

"Damn right," Nonon smirked. "Is the truth too hard for you, Monkey-boy?"

"Listen here, Snake-"

"Oh, and by the way," Inumuta added, getting up from the table and suddenly moving towards the bathrooms. "I'd hide if I were you. Unpleasant company incoming at three o'clock."

"Oh. My. Satsuki." Ryuko suddenly breathed, ducking under the table and swearing mildly as her head crashed against her best friend's knee by accident. "It's *them* . Hide before they-"

"Ryuko-chaaaaaaaaaaan," an overly sweet voice sang as a pink-clothed girl suddenly materialized out of thin air and plopped onto the recently vacated chair with a grace best described akin to an eagle piloting a blimp. "Are you hiding from little old *me* ?"

"Kami damn it." Ryuko muttered, slumping as a familiar rainbow-glow filled the inside of the restaurant and partially blinded the poor patrons with its brilliance.

"I'm out of here," Nonon scrambled to her feet, hurriedly gathered her things, and left with nothing but an apologetic glance back at her best friend. When Discomilf was involved, nothing good could come out of it, nor could she help Satsuki escape. What Discomilf wanted, Discomilf got, and anyone who stood in her way got an unfortunate taste of her tendency to unceasingly make more inappropriate jokes than a football field's worth of middle schoolers.

"Ditto." Uzu swiftly followed, tailed by several dozen panicked customers.

"Mankanshoku," Ira thundered, dexterously plucking the younger girl up with two massive fingers. "You must leave!" Another two fingers secured her ears against whatever lewd jokes the self-proclaimed "world's best mom" made in passing to the screaming streams of people as he bulldozed his way out through the restaurant's door.

"But what about Ryuko-chan!" She protested.

"Matoi will survive. I will return to both her and Satsuki-sama, but we must retreat for now."

"What did you say!?" she shouted back.

"Matoi will-"

BOOM

The doors slammed shut, then fell off their hinges completely. Thick eyebrows knitted together tiredly. So much for taking a vacation with the extra storage of money she was saving up.

"Nui. Mother." Satsuki addressed simply, pretending to be unaffected by neither either person's presence, nor the complete disarray the building was left in. "To whom or what do I owe the pleasure of meeting you both here?"

"Lunch," Ragyo replied. "But I now see Nui wants take out."

"Aw, can't I see my big sisters sometimes without being accused of spying on them?" the shortest girl giggled, holding a very uncomfortable Ryuko against her in a bear hug and toying with the latter's dyed streak.

Satsuki made a low humming noise in the back of her throat that sounded not unlike a disturbed hive of wasps.

"I overheard you and your friends talking about the zodiac signs and, well," She plopped onto the mangled table with her older sister in tow, unfazed when it broke under their weight and sent everything spilling to the floor below. "I wanted to know what you think I'd be."

"You can be the rooster," Ryuko replied thoughtfully, hissing as her back shot up in pain when she tried disengaging herself from the mess.

"Oh?" Nui leaned in closer. The delinquent struggled not to gag as the overwhelming flowery odor that seemed to follow the blonde

everywhere invaded her nostrils. "And why is that?"

"Because you're a giant dick."

She stuck her tongue out. "Mean. You might as well be a horse because you're so full of shit."

"Well, I think that the most underrated out of the twelve is the boar. It is a majestic creature that expresses indulgence but is generous in turn," the human rainbow added, pointedly ignoring the squabbling pair in the background.

"That's because you're a pig in human clothing." Satsuki mumbled under her breath.

"Satsuki!" Ragyo clasped her scantily clothed chest, affronted.

"She started it!" a finger accusingly pointed towards the delinquent.

"Did not! You wanna go, ya alley cat!?"

"Bring it, gecko!"

Ragyo exhaled loudly through her nose. Now she remembered why she generally stayed away from this part of Japan. Just as she reached into her purse to fish out a thick wad of yen to hand to the terrified managers, the wall behind her collapsed as a hulking giant pulverized it with a well-placed punch.

"SATSUKI-SAMA!"

The vein in her temple throbbed. Wonderful.